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ABSTRACT

A survey was conducted to determine the nature of career education programs provided for gifted/talented (G/T) students in the West Kentucky service region. Thirteen gifted coordinators completed questionnaires on programing. All respondents indicated that some type of pull out program was employed for their G/T students. Fifteen percent also provided instruction for G/T students outside the regular school day. Sixty-nine percent indicated that career education information was presented within the context of the G/T program and 31% indicated it was not addressed. Thirty-one percent indicated that career education was part of the regular instructional program. The majority (85%) of respondents believed that G/T teachers would be interested in career education information for their students. The survey questionnaire is appended. (CL)

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A SURVEY OF CAREER EDUCATION FOR GIFTED AND TALENTED STUDENTS IN WEST KENTUCKY

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A Survey of Career Education for

Gifted and Talented Students in West Kentucky

The importance of differentiated guidance for Gifted and Talented (G/T) children, based on the obvious acceleration in their developmental task schedule, has been recognized since the pioneering work of John Rothney, John Flanagan, and John Gowan (Zaffrann and Colangelo, 1977). Career education (C.E.) for G/T students has drawn the attention of educators and others since the first sessions of the National Invitational Seminars on Career Education for G/T Students in 1972 (Clar, 1983). Since that time, and particularly in the past few years, educational programs for G/T children have proliferated at a rapid rate. It is not evident, however, that C.E. for students in those programs has been provided at a commensurate rate.

C.E. has typically been provided through specialized guidance programs and through infusion of C.E. concepts with ongoing instructional programs. The latter method has received widespread lip-service with the incidence of implementation apparently lagging far behind. It is also apparent that either method, if developed for a general school population, would not be appropriate for G/T students. Gifted and Talented students may encounter unique problems in establishing their career (Clark, 1983). These include: (1) The possession of multiple talents and interests that complicate career choices, (2) High expectations of parents, teachers, and themselves, (3) The long period of training required for many professional careers preferred by G/T

individuals, and (4) The social isolation that results from interests that are too different from those of their peers.

The purpose of this study is to determine if G/T students in West Kentucky are receiving C.E., if those programs utilize the guidance or infusion methods, and if those programs are adequate to meet the special needs of those students.

Review of Literature

The literature surveyed, relative to C.E. for G/T students, was grouped into three general categories. Those categories contain literature composed of testimony concerning the need for Career Education for G/T students, description of vocational guidance programs for G/T students, and information about C.E. programs for G/T students.

Testimony

Eloquent arguments for differentiated C.E. for G/T students are made in books by Khatena (1982), Gawan, Khatena, and Torrance (1979), and Clark, (1983). Those statements, as well as articles by Hoyt and Hebler (1974) and Gowan (1977) discuss the problems that G/T individuals may encounter in establishing their careers and emphasize the importance of the proper match of aptitudes and interests in guiding a G/T student to make an optimal career choice. A study, reported by Colson (1980) indicated that C.E. programs for G/T students are important. Post high school reactions of students verified that the C.E. program most influenced their career direction. This as compared to extracurricular activities, advanced courses, enrichment activities, and the school guidance program.

Guidance Programs

Several guidance programs for G/T students were mentioned in the literature surveyed. Three were described in some detail and will be included in this review. One program described by Gowan (1977) used a high ratio of counselors to G/T students, one counselor for 25 children plus two head counselors. Success for this program was attributed to counselors working with teachers and being available to students before, during, and following instruction. Another model, discussed by Perrane, Karshner, and Male (1979), used Ericksonian and Maslovian theory to help G/T students develop an understanding of their unique career patterns.

The use of Sociodrama for C.E. for G/T students was described by Torrance (1976). The approach uses role playing and creative problem solving to present C.E. concepts to program participants.

Career Education Programs

The C.E. programs surveyed differ slightly from some guidance programs. The difference is that counselors are not utilized as major elements in the instructional sequence. One such model is described by Feldhusen and Kollof (1979). The model includes instructional activities to enhance and develop creative thinking, problem solving skills, project abilities, exploratory, reading, and independent learning capacity. It provides a framework for C.E. for G/T students. The most comprehensive survey of C.E. programs for G/T students was reported by Kerr (1981). She described 11 programs that relate to career

development needs of G/T students; specifically, (1) multipotentiality, (2) emotional maturity and long range planning and, (3) societal expectations vs. personal career goals. An instructional technique advocated for G/T education, the use of mentors, is common to many of these programs. Noticeable by its absence is the use of infusion. That technique may be employed but is not described in any of the literature reviewed.

Method

A survey was conducted to determine the nature of C.E. programs provided for G/T students in the West Kentucky service region. The 25 Gifted Coordinators were mailed a questionnaire that asked for information about the type of Gifted program provided, how C.E. was addressed, and if additional information concerning C.E. for Gifted students would be of interest to the various teachers of the Gifted. (A copy of the instrument is contained in the appendix). Thirteen of the 24 (54%) Gifted Coordinators responded to the request by completing and returning questionnaire forms.

Results

One hundred percent of the respondents indicated that some type of pull out program was employed for their Gifted/Talented students. Pull out means that groups of G/T students are removed from the regular classroom setting and grouped for special instruction. Fifteen percent also provided instruction for G/T students outside the regular school day.

Sixty-nine percent of the respondents indicated that C.E. information was presented within the context of the G/T program and 31% indicated that C.E. was not addressed in the special programs. Thirty-one percent stated that C.E. was included in the regular instructional programs in their district. Thirty-eight percent of those who indicated that C.E. was addressed in G/T programs described methods of infusing C.E. into those programs. Eighty-five percent indicated that information concerning C.E. for G/T students would be of interest to teachers of the Gifted in their school districts.

Discussion

Data that were produced by this survey suggests that G/T students in West Kentucky are not provided appropriate C.E., only two-thirds of G/T programs present C.E. concepts as part of those instructional programs. Approximately one sixth of G/T students are not receiving C.E. in any aspect of their curriculum. It appears that only one-third of G/T students have C.E. concepts infused into their specialized instructional programs.

The fact that the majority (85%) of respondents believed that G/T teachers would be interested in C.E. information for their students suggests that many teachers and administrators feel that existing efforts are inadequate. This perception is shared by the writer who has formed the impression through informal observation. It seems evident that the need of G/T students in this service region could be more fully met through teacher training in C.E. infusion methods and use of those techniques in G/T programs.

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APPENDIX

Survey Questionnaire

CAREER EDUCATION FOR GIFTED/TALENTED STUDENTS

WEST KENTUCKY REGION SURVEY

1. Please provide the following descriptive information regarding your G/T program(s).

   a. Type of program(s)_____.

   b. Subject areas included_____.

   c. Grade levels encompassed_____.

2. Is Career Education addressed in your G/T program(s)? yes____ no____

   If yes, describe briefly how it is presented.

   If no, is it addressed in your G/T student's regular instructional program? yes____ no____ Please describe briefly how C.E. is addressed in those settings.

3. Would information concerning Career Education for G/T students be of interest to your G/T teachers? yes____ no____

4. Would inclusion of Career Education in your G/T program(s) be feasible and/or desirable?

Thank you, Please Return Using the Self-Addressed Envelope Enclosed.